

Message Text

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E. O. 11652:NA
TAGS: UK MPOL NATO
SUBJECT: DEBATE ON THE ROYAL NAVY

REF: A) LONDON 4111; B) LONDON 4195; C) LONDON 5266

1. THE DEBATE ON THE ROYAL NAVY TOOK PLACE ON 19 JULY.
PATRICK WALL (A CONSERVATIVE SPOKESMAN ON NAVAL AFFAIRS)
OPENED THE DEBATE FOR THE OPPOSITION AND PATRICK DUFFY
(PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY FOR THE RN) SPOKE FOR
THE GOVERNMENT.
2. WALL ATTACKED THE GOVERNMENT FOR DEFERRING RESTORA-
TION OF COMPARABILITY ON SERVICE PAY UNTIL APRIL 1980,
ARGUING THAT PAY PROBLEMS UNDERMINED RN EFFICIENCY
BECAUSE OF THE SHORTAGE OF OFFICERS AND IN PARTICULAR OF
HELICOPTER PILOTS. HE NOTED THAT IN 1977 65 PILOTS
LEFT THE SERVICE COMPARED WITH 47 IN 1976 AND 37 IN 1975.
HE PREDICTED THAT FOR 1978 THE FIGURE COULD BE WORSE
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THAN LAST YEAR'S. HE SAID THE OPPOSITION IS CONCERNED
ABOUT "OVERSTRETCH" OF MANPOWER, NOTING THAT A ONE-THIRD
INCREASE IN THE AVERAGE HOURS A DESTROYER/FRIGATE
SPENT AT SEA (FROM 1970 HOURS IN 1957 TO 2780 IN 1977)
WAS CAUSING CONSIDERABLE STRAIN TO KEY OFFICERS AND
PERSONNEL.

3. WALL ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT OF VIRTUALLY TURNING A "WORLDWIDE NAVY" INTO A "HOME WATERS" DEFENSE FORCE THROUGH SUCCESSIVE CUTS IN DEFENSE SPENDING AND THAT THESE CUTS WERE "SERIOUSLY AFFECTING BRITAIN'S CONTRIBUTION" TO THE DEFENSE OF THE WEST AT A TIME WHEN THE SOVIET UNION WAS INCREASING NAVAL EXPENDITURE AND INFLUENCE.

4. DUFFY ASSERTED THAT BRITAIN HAD A MODERN AND EFFECTIVE NAVY AND ALSO AN IMPRESSIVE NEW STRUCTURE OF MARITIME PROGRAMS "TO ENSURE THIS REMAINED THE CASE." HE ARGUED THAT WHILE NO COUNTRY COULD PROVIDE "AN ABSOLUTE GUARANTEE" OF PROTECTION AGAINST SURPRISE ATTACK, ANY POTENTIAL AGGRESSOR WOULD KNOW THAT BRITAIN COULD "REACT PROMPTLY TO AN ATTACK OF ANY KIND."

5. DUFFY DISCLOSED THAT EARLIER PROPOSALS FOR INTRODUCING A NEW "FINANCIAL REGIME" FOR THE ROYAL DOCKYARDS TO PUT THEIR OPERATIONS ON THE SAME BASIS AS OTHER STATE TRADING ORGANIZATIONS (ON A PROFIT AND LOSS BASIS WITH FINANCE COMING FROM A TRADING FUND INSTEAD OF FROM THE ROYAL NAVY VOTE) HAVE BEEN DROPPED BY THE GOVERNMENT. DUFFY NOTED THAT THE DISADVANTAGES OF ESTABLISHING A GOVERNMENT TRADING FUND FOR THE DOCKYARDS WERE READILY DISCERNIBLE WHILE THE ADVANTAGES WERE AT BEST INDISCERNIBLE.

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6. DUFFY DISCLOSED THAT MOD IS CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF PURCHASING A NEW HELICOPTER CAPABLE OF LIFTING THE 105MM LIGHT GUN AS A SINGLE LOAD. IN WINDING UP FOR THE GOVERNMENT, DUFFY OBSERVED THAT THE FLEET REVIEWED LAST YEAR BY THE QUEEN "MAY HAVE BEEN SMALLER THAN THE ONE AT THE CORONATION--BUT IT PACKED A MUCH GREATER PUNCH."

BREWSTER

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